



SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS

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Abstract

Persons with hearing impairment face isolation due to lack of an acceptable mode of communication between them and the “hearing” world, and also because of non-acceptance of the disability in the family, etc., This research focuses on the social adjustment of Hearing Impaired Students in Tamil Nadu and attempts to find the reasons so that solutions can be looked at together by parents, teachers, educators, society, government, etc., The finding shows that less social adjustment was found among the respondents and who were found to be more socially adjusted were those who had a poor level of interaction with their teachers. Students want to be accepted by their peers, and hence do not interact much with the teachers, for the fear that they may be excluded by their peers.

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization, 360 million people have disabling hearing loss, i.e., over 5% of the world’s population. Hearing loss that is greater than 40 decibels (dB) in the better hearing ear in the adults and hearing loss that is greater than 30 decibels (dB) in the better hearing ear in children is termed as disabling hearing loss.

Persons with hearing loss fall under the category of “Disability” group, and are termed as “Hearing Impaired”, “Deaf”, “Hard of Hearing”, “Deaf-mute”, etc.,

This may be the result of complications at birth, genetic reasons, certain childhood & infectious diseases, chronic ear infections, accidents, noise pollution, wrong usage of certain drugs, aging, etc.,

Hearing loss may be prelingual, which means from birth or during infancy, before the acquisition of language, or postlingual, that happens during childhood or later, after language is acquired.

People who experience hearing loss face various challenges in communication, and may have to get familiar with devices such as hearing aids, or undergo cochlear implants or learn sign language and lip reading, depending on when it occurred and how long it took to develop.

Hearing aids help in hearing. They do not cure deafness but amplify the sounds that enter the ear so that the listener can hear things more clearly. A hearing aid is not suitable for those with profound deafness. Cochlear implant aids those whose hearing is caused by hair cell damage in the cochlea, by helping most people to understand speech better. Some children with hearing impairment have speech problem and difficulties in understanding what other people say. They learn other ways of communicating, such as, lip reading or sign language.

Hearing loss affects language-learning in children and hence children miss out in the crucial years of learning, which is 0-5, due to delayed identification and diagnosis. Interventions such as hearing aids and speech therapy are suggested for the child, which, enable the child to hear sounds and try to produce speech, but do not actually assist in learning a language.

Need for the Study

Special Schools for Deaf use various approaches in providing education to the deaf children. Speech, lipreading, gestures & a method called Total Communication, which is a mix of all the three. Teachers customize the education programmes according to the students’ needs in Special Schools. Schools also offer mainstreaming/inclusive set up, where deaf children study alongside hearing children and benefit from regular interaction with hearing peers and therefore enjoy social inclusion. Children with hearing loss, especially those with severe symptoms, may not only experience delayed language development, but their social development will take longer too, as oral language and the ability to use social cues are very closely interrelated.

Hearing children pick up information from the surroundings through sounds, noises, conversations of people around them, Television, etc., from day one of their lives. Deaf children lack information through the same medium. Very little input is given to them by parents (in the early years) as they are not aware of a language/mode of communication, that they could use to convey information. As they are visual learners, they end up learning what they see and assume on their own. Teachers also think that deaf students learn the same way as the hearing students, except for the fact that they can’t hear. Researches at



RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf, show that there are differences between deaf and hearing students in how their memory works, the organization of their knowledge, and their learning strategies are simply different. For example, deaf people's visual-spatial memories are better than hearing people's. But sequential memory isn't as good."

All these and more, persons with hearing impairment face isolation due to lack of an acceptable mode of communication between them and the "hearing" world, and also because of non-acceptance of the disability in the family, etc., This research focuses on the social adjustment of Hearing Impaired Students in Tamil Nadu and attempts to find the reasons so that solutions can be looked at together by parents, teachers, educators, society, government, etc.,

Review of Literature

Social Adjustment in this particular context means a harmonious relationship with the students and teachers, Proper understanding of social needs, requirements and group goals, and meeting effectively to the social requirements of the home, peer groups, culture and the community. Adjustment is very crucial for all. Any individual who fails to adjust to the his surroundings, tends to get depressed, isolated, mentally stressed, faces ill health, and shows poor work performance.

Rodda (1969) reported that deaf students were better accepted than hard-of-hearing persons. **Bowyer and Gillies (1972)** contradicted these earlier results, noting no difference except in one small sub-group. In another related study, **Bruinicks and Kennedy (1972)** concluded that young deaf students were accepted by their peers. Despite these disparate results, two major trends were evident from this research. First, integration appears to be advantageous for academic performances, but it is inversely related to social adjustment. Second, Social adjustment is directly related to social rejection and social isolation (**Farrugia & Austin, 1980**).

A study (**Carol Musselman, Anju Mootilal & Sherri Mackay, 1996**), examined the social adjustment of deaf adolescents enrolled in segregated, partially integrated, and mainstreamed settings, comparing them with a control group of hearing students. Segregated students showed the lowest levels of adjustment overall. Partially integrated students reported better adjustment than mainstreamed students with deaf peers; mainstreamed students reported better adjustment than partially integrated students with hearing peers, showing the same levels of adjustment with hearing peers as hearing students. Regardless of placement, deaf students reported better or equal adjustment with deaf than with hearing peers.

A study by **Sobia Bashir and Muhammad Naveed Riaz et al;(2014)** revealed that the social behavior of private deaf school students was found to be better when compared to that of the deaf school students learning in public schools because of the nature of the environments. The reason behind this was when the school and home members attend systematically to the adolescent deaf students of higher classes the social behavior was found to be good in terms of emotional and cognitive skill.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the demographic details of Hearing Impaired Students
2. To find the level of Social Adjustment and factors associated with Social Adjustment of Hearing Impaired Students

Research Methodology

Research Design & Sampling

Descriptive Design has been considered for this particular study as the demographic facts of Hearing Impaired Students are collected and the factors of their social adjustment are studied, analyzed and interpreted.

The population of the study represents the Higher Secondary Schools for the Deaf, in Tamil Nadu, which granted permission to conduct the research.

Non-Probability Method of Sampling was used. Sample size is 555 respondents from 8 Schools for the Deaf in 6 Cities/Districts of Tamil Nadu – Coimbatore, Chennai, Madurai, Ambur, Tiruvallur & Tiruvannamalai.

Letters explaining the need for a study on Social assessment of Hearing Impaired students and requesting permission to administer questionnaire to the students was sent to the Heads of all Higher Secondary Schools for the Deaf, in Tamil Nadu, along with a consent form. Only the schools that granted permission, were visited and the students who were present on that particular day in the particular school were the respondents, making it as accidental sampling.

Tools of Data Collection

Meadow-Kendall Social-emotional Assessment Inventory for Deaf & Hearing Impaired students, from Gallaudet University, was chosen as appropriate tool with three dimensions namely Social Adjustment, Self-Image & Emotional Adjustment for the main study. The questionnaire was "signed" to the students for better understanding and took about 2 ½ - 3 hours per



class of 20 – 25 students. As the inventory was a teacher-rater questionnaire, it was modified by the researcher by changing the questionnaire from Third Person singular to First person singular. It was validated by professionals in the field, and pre-tested on 40 students studying in various Special Schools for the Hearing Impaired, in Coimbatore. The questionnaire was also translated into Tamil, as that is the medium of instruction in schools in Tamil Nadu. It was also made in Indian Sign Language and was validated by Language Experts. The tool was tested for Reliability and the score stands at: 0.775

Data Processing & Interpretation

The data has been processed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Simple statistical methods were applied and the findings of the study have been represented by using simple tables, Chi-Square Test and ANOVA Test.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Level of Social Adjustment of Hearing Impaired Students

S. No	Level of Social Adjustment	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Less Social Adjustment (22-70)	288	51.9
2	More Social Adjustment (71-110)	267	48.1
	TOTAL	555	100.0

It can be seen in the table above, that a majority (**51.9%**) of the respondents have a lower level of social adjustment. It can also be noted that the difference between the less socially adjusted and the more socially adjusted respondents is very minimal, with the latter, amounting to only **48.1%**. Hence, it can be concluded that a simple majority of Hearing Impaired students are not well socially adjusted. The “less” and “more” of social adjustment, are classified using the Median value of social adjustment scores.

With the society showing discrimination, it is difficult for Hearing Impaired children to adjust well. But, in a way, education helps them to feel more socially included, by giving them an opportunity to learn, study, participate, compete, exhibit and excel.

From the data compiled from the questionnaire, the following table could be made, that gives us a clear picture of the factors associated with social adjustment of Hearing Impaired Students.

Table 2: Factors Associated With Social Adjustment of Hearing Impaired Students

S. No	Factors	Test Conducted	Result
1.	Age	ANOVA	NS
2.	Gender	Chi-Square	NS
3.	Class of Study	ANOVA	S
4.	Marital Status of Parents	Chi-Square	NS
5.	Birth Order	ANOVA	NS
6.	Witnessed Arguments at Home	Chi-Square	S
7.	Siblings	Chi-Square	NS
8.	Number of Friends	Chi-Square	S
9.	Group Play Preferences	Chi-Square	S
10.	Dependency upon Others	Chi-Square	NS
11.	Scholastic Performance	ANOVA	NS
12.	Special Skills	ANOVA	NS
13.	Participation in Extra –Curricular Activities	Chi-Square	S
14.	Hobbies	ANOVA	S
15.	Interaction with Teachers	Chi-Square	S

Factors such as the class of study, witnessing of arguments / fights at home by the respondents, the number of friends that the students have, their group play preferences, participation in extra –curricular activities, hobbies and interaction with teachers, are associated with their social adjustment.

- Class XI students are more socially adjustable than those studying in Classes X & XII, as they have no academic pressures, fear of exams, or deadlines. Having finished Class X, they are a bit free and can afford to take time for things around them.
- The respondents who witnessed arguments/fights at home, are less socially adjustable than those who have not experienced the same.

This finding is supported by a previous study by (Litrownik et al., 2003).



Exposure to domestic violence in childhood has been linked to low self-esteem, social withdrawal, depression, and anxiety.

- Students who have many friends are more socially adjustable, as one makes friends, one tends to socialize more, and vice versa.

In a case study of a subset of 25 deaf student participants, by **Antia et al. (2008)**, one of the students that initially presented a profile of an isolated student, with very few friends, given access to a wider group of peers in school environment, resulted in a positive social outcome such as more social interaction and relationships.

- Children who played in groups showed more social adjustment. Group play develops social skills. They are required to obey instructions, ask, follow, understand and be compatible with others in a group.
- Students who did not participate in extra curricular activities were more socially adjustable.
- Hobbies such as gardening and carpentry do not involve interaction with others and those inclined towards these hobbies manifested less social adjustment.
- Those who were found to be more socially adjusted were those who had a poor level of interaction with their teachers. Students want to be accepted by their peers, and hence do not interact much with the teachers, for the fear that they may be excluded by their peers.

Major Findings

- Some of the demographic details of Hearing Impaired Students are highlighted here:
- Majority of the students (80.2%) are about 19 years of age, with boys constituting a higher percentage of respondents (70.5%).
- Most of the students (72.3%) are studying in Class XI & Class XII and about three quarters of them (74.4%) report facing disturbances with siblings.
- Almost Three quarters of the respondents (74.6%) witness arguments/fights between parents.
- Majority of respondents (95.7%) are interested in spiritual matters, while a little over three quarters of the students (79.8%) believe in morality.
- A very small percentage of students (37.8%) have between 1-5 friends.
- A good majority of Hearing Impaired students (61.3%) prefer studying in groups and an overwhelming majority of them (95.9%) prefer playing in groups.
- Majority of the respondents (82.2%) are average performers in academics and three-fourths of them (74.4%) participate in extra curricular activities.
- Almost half of the students (48.3%) communicate in sign at school, while a little over half of them (53.9%) use the local language Tamil to communicate with family members.
- The prime hobby of 63.8% of respondents is playing and sports are special skills for over three-fourths of them (76.8%).
- About half of the respondents (49.4%) interact with their teachers to a satisfactory level.

Suggestions & Conclusions

Majority of deaf student community is at less Social Adjustment level, which implies that social work interventions are required for students as well as parents and also for the community at large, to enhance the Social Adjustment of Hearing Impaired children / persons in general and Social Adjustment of Hearing Impaired students in particular.

- Sign Language should be made a requirement for all teachers, social workers, educators, and used in schools, for easy and flowing communication with deaf students, for counseling, to bond, to address various issues and help them to feel part of the society.
- Awareness programmes/Sessions/Sign Language Training may be conducted to educate parents on how to bring about social inclusion through the parents' time with their deaf children and through effective communication with them to bond with them and understand them better.
- More researches to be done in the field of "disability", so that the research-based facts and findings can help clarify individuals' misconceptions, alleviate apprehensions, and present workable solutions by removing rigidity and creating an openness to knowing, learning and thereby, changing.

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